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Error Profiles of Dyslexic and Non Dyslexic Children in Their L1 (Greek) and L2 (English)

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Introduction

It is generally accepted that not all languages are equal in terms of their phonological complexity, spelling/orthography or grammar. Thus, it is obvious that the more complex a language system is the harder it is to acquire for both normally developing and dyslexic children. A language with a "perfect" spelling is one with no alternative spellings for the same sound and no overlap in the code where one spelling pattern stands for different sounds (Spencer, 2000).

In the *Greek* orthography each letter consistently represents the same sound, but the same sound can be represented by different letters or pairs of letters. This makes spelling more difficult than reading (Miles, 2000). The Greek alphabet has 25 letters and a small number of digraphs (where two graphemes represent a single sound). There are regular correspondences between graphemes and phonemes so that all letters consistently represent the same sounds (apart from very few exceptions).

On the other hand, the *English* spelling system is very complicated and difficult mainly because of its many incosistencies of phoneme-grapheme correspondence especially for a dyslexic child, either for reading or writing purposes. This is what Spencer (2000) means when he says that 'if English pupils are so damaged by their orthography that their performance is worse than dyslexic pupils' performance in other more orthographically transparent languages, then English can truly be said to be a dyslexic language'.

In view of the above, we ran a study in order to find out the pattern of errors made by dyslexics and non-dyslexics in two different languages, Greek (L1) and English (L2), one (Greek) much more transparent than the other (English). More specifically, our hypotheses were a) that dyslexics make much more errors than non-dyslexics and b) that dyslexics make more phonological errors in English than in Greek.

Method and Results

Our study included eight subjects, four dyslexics and four non dyslexics, who were native speakers of the Greek language (L1) and learnt English as a foreign language (L2). They composed two picture elicited narratives, one in Greek and one in English with the aid of ScriptLog, an online recording tool for experimental research on the process of writing. We ran independent samples t tests, which showed that dyslexics generally made a significantly higher number of errors ($p < .05$) in both languages in comparison to non-dyslexics and a statistically significant higher number of phonological errors in English than in Greek. In addition, dyslexics made a high number of spelling mistakes in both languages, of a different nature depending on the language in which they occurred. Thus, the dyslexics in our study showed different error profiles in English and in Greek and implications

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are made that instruction methods should be language specific.

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